

## EMPLOYMENT

# Information technology market growing in state

By Jeff Kanan

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Despite a slumping economy and shrinking job opportunities for most fields, experts said there's a shortage of information technology workers in the state.

A rapidly increasing demand for IT jobs during the past five years combined with a diminished supply of college graduates in the field has created the shortage, said Jim Hogan, information officer for the Michigan Department of Information Technology.

"There's a number of vacancies in Mid-Michigan, and the supply in college graduates isn't meeting it," Hogan said. "Most businesses in Michigan have some kind of IT positions, and there's lots of individuals losing jobs that we're trying to recruit."

Web developers, database managers, computer sales per-

sonnel and JAVA programmers are some of the positions that are in demand, Hogan said.

The difficulty of degree fields for some of the jobs that are in demand plays a role in the shortage, said Chris Knapp, executive director of the Capital Area IT Council.

"For the most part, these are jobs with great pay, but require higher skill levels and education," Knapp said. "There's opportunities for folks with the right skill sets."

Between 1998 and 2004, hundreds of IT jobs were created and the industry grew by about 20 percent, Knapp said. He added that about 1,500 jobs are expected to be created in Michigan between now and 2014.

"It's always a good thing in terms of job creation, but obviously there's a need for these people right now," Knapp said.

Of MDIT's 1,500 employees, almost 45 percent will be eligible for retirement in the next three

or four years, Hogan said.

MDIT has put on outreach programs to high school students to let them know jobs are available in the field, Hogan said.

"This is less math-related than people think," Hogan said. "People believe in order to be successful in this field they have to have a lot of math classes, but that's not the case."

On average, the MSU College of Engineering sees 2.9 job offers per student before graduation from the college, said Kate Tykocki, chief communications officer for Capital Area Michigan Works!

Local IT managers said despite the shortage they've seen a good turnout for available positions.

"We recently posted a job for an IT director ... and we had about 130 applicants," said Harvey Briggs, manager of IT for the Lansing Board of Water and Light. "I think it just depends on the area of the field if there's a shortage or not."

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